

VZCZCXRO2138
PP RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHNNH
DE RUEHHM #0052/01 0430911
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 120911Z FEB 10
FM AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6319
INFO RUEHHI/AMEMBASSY HANOI PRIORITY 4201
RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY PRIORITY 6562

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HO CHI MINH CITY 000052

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS AND DRL/AWH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2/12/2020
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [VM](#)
SUBJECT: NGUYEN TIEN TRUNG'S PARENTS ASK USG TO REQUEST AMNESTY

REF: HCMC 33 AND PREVIOUS

HO CHI MIN 00000052 001.2 OF 002

CLASSIFIED BY: Kenneth J. Fairfax, Consul General, U.S.
Consulate General Ho Chi Minh City, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. Summary: (C) During their February 8 meeting with visiting EAP DAS Marciel, the parents of jailed democracy activist Nguyen Tien Trung asked the USG to press the GVN to grant their son amnesty. Trung's parents said they are allowed monthly visits, can give Trung a small stipend, and that Trung appeared well during their last visit before the January 20 trial. Trung's parents believe his arrest was related to GVN efforts to stifle dissent prior to the 2011 Congress as well as his links to the West. Both Trung's father (a retired military officer and CPV member for over thirty years), and his mother (a CPV member for over twenty years) were clearly quite disillusioned with the party they had supported most of their lives. End summary.

¶2. (C) Mr. Nguyen Tu Tu and Mrs. Le Thi Minh Tam met with DAS Marciel and CG on February 8 to discuss the latest news regarding their son Nguyen Tien Trung, the democracy activist and blogger who was convicted of sedition on January 20 along with Le Cong Dinh, Tran Huynh Duy Thuc and Le Thang Long. Trung was arrested on July 7, 2009, one day after being dishonorably discharged from compulsory military service. DAS Marciel began the meeting by expressing his sympathy regarding Trung's conviction and assuring his parents that the USG remains deeply concerned about his welfare and was advocating for his release and that of all political prisoners in Vietnam at the highest levels of government.

¶3. (C) said they last met with Trung on January 8 (before the January 20 trial), and he appeared to be in generally good health and spirits. They have been able to send him a monthly stipend of approximately \$30 USD (600,000 VND) and planned to see him again on February 10 (Note: Trung's girlfriend in the U.S. informed PolOff via e--mail that Trung's parents visited him on February 10th as planned. End note). When asked about the possibility of an appeals trial, Mr. Tu said the court would not answer their inquiry directly, but relayed that "papers had been filed" with the Supreme People's Procuracy. Since Trung plead guilty, the thrust of his lawyer's appeal case will be aimed at reducing his sentence rather than overturning the verdict. Regarding Trung's decision to plead guilty, Tu said Trung had no reason to feel guilty, because he had always accepted the role of the Communist Party in the government and had no intention of trying to overthrow the government. When he established Viet Youth for Democracy and joined the Democratic Party of Vietnam (DPV), Tu said, Trung wanted expand the space

for political expression in Vietnam.

14. (C) Tu speculated that Trung's arrest was part of an effort by the GVN to stifle criticism of the Party prior to the 2011 Party Congress. Tu also believes that Trung's contacts with the West, in particular, his connection to U.S.-based DPV leader Nguyen Sy Binh and his meetings with former President Bush, Canadian PM Harper and the chairman of the EU, made him a target of GVN reprisal. Tu also asserted that because Trung had introduced Le Cong Dinh to Tran Huynh Duy Thuc and Le Thanh Long, he was the "link" prosecutors needed to help build the case against the four into a conspiratorial plot to overthrow the GVN. Tu, like other reliable contacts with whom we have spoken, stated that the four defendants were not closely acquainted. Tu believes Trung was only guilty of introducing people with similar ideas to each other.

15. (C) During the January 20 trial (reftel), Tu said family members of the accused could hear the testimony via CCTV, but affirmed the audio feed was "not very clear" at times, as was the case for foreign diplomats and press watching the proceedings via CCTV in a separate room. Tu said he and his wife remained very concerned about their son, especially after hearing about the harsh prison conditions Thuc and Long described at the trial. They worried about pressure and tactics police may have used to force Trung into "confessing his crimes," since his testimony ran contrary to Trung's personal convictions, including his view -- which his parents clearly share -- that he had done nothing wrong.

16. (C) Mr. Tu and his wife thanked USG and Mission Vietnam officials for their support and advocacy on Trung's case and urged the USG "through any means or intervention" to try and convince the GVN to "let my son come home." Tu said some of his

HO CHI MIN 00000052 002.2 OF 002

well-placed government contacts believe the GVN may announce an amnesty in conjunction with Hanoi's 1000 year anniversary, and asked that we submit Trung's name for consideration. DAS Marciel assured Trung's parents that the U.S. would continue to advocate for Trung's release here in Vietnam as well as in Washington.

17. (C) Comment: A/S Posner raised Trung's case along with others during our November 2009 Human Rights Dialogue. The Ambassador also sent a letter to Foreign Minister Pham Gia Khiem last week encouraging the GVN to grant Trung and others amnesty at Tet. One Foreign Ministry official has since told us the GVN has decided against doing a Tet amnesty this year. The last time the GVN did not have a national Tet amnesty was in 2008. End comment.)

18. (C) While most of the conversation focused on their son, Trung's parents are bearing their own hardships. Trung's father, Tu, is a retired military officer and had been a member of the CPV for over thirty years. His wife was a CPV member of twenty years standing. Not only were both ejected from the CPV, they complained that the CPV did not even follow its own internal procedures in the process. There was no formal decision; there was no review by the official party disciplinary board. Instead, the couple was simply informed by local CPV officials that they had been expelled from the party because they had failed to raise their son properly. The CPV (which always controls the personnel section at all state-affiliated companies), contacted his employer and attempted to have him summarily fired. While he was able to resist that move, he was

removed from his position of responsibility and placed into a menial job with the clear intention of forcing (or shaming) him into resigning.

¶9. (SBU) Comment: The decision to, in effect, punish Trung's parents for their son's alleged crimes is consistent with recent pronouncements from the MPS. An article published in the official MPS Newspaper recently warned parents that the biggest risk facing children studying abroad is not "the free, indulgent lifestyles" or even "social evils such as gambling, drug abuse, alcohol, etc." Instead, the greatest danger facing Vietnamese youths studying abroad are "political traps laid by anti-Vietnam hostile forces to entice and degenerate young intellectuals." The article went on to explain that many youths lured into such nefarious traps were the children of families with stellar revolutionary credentials but that the students' actions betray both the nation and their families. End Comment.

¶10. (U) DAS Marciel did not have an opportunity to clear this cable. This cable was coordinated with Embassy Hanoi.
FAIRFAX